

## **Process Options for Estuarine Habitat Workshop**

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The following options could be used to help structure discussion during the habitat workshop. They are not entirely mutually exclusive. For example, the draft consensus statements could be used in the round robin structure. Similarly, the use of a short list of tightly framed questions (as in the NIH consensus conference format described below) could also be used in a variety of other structures.

### ***Straw man consensus statements***

Where the goal is to achieve a degree of agreement, or even consensus, on one or more well-defined topics, the process can be accelerated by preparing alternative straw man consensus statements ahead of time. The project team would prepare a small number of draft consensus statements that highlight contrasting interpretations of or conclusions about the presented material and the workshop questions. After the presentations, a pre-selected individual would advocate as strongly as possible for each straw man statement, with the intent of provoking counter arguments from the participants. After a period of discussion, participants would be divided into groups to revise the statements (one statement per group). Following the small group work, participants reconvene to discuss, focusing on identifying and resolving remaining areas of disagreement or concern.

### ***Round robin workgroups***

The default method of developing one or more products in a larger (more than 10) group when time is limited is to break the larger group into smaller groups, assign pieces of the overall task to them, send them off to do their thing, and then bring everyone back together to hear reports from each small group.

This structure has the benefit of parallel processing and enables more conversations to take place simultaneously. It has two important drawbacks, however. First, participants are directly involved in only the assignment given to the small group they are part of. They only hear about discussion on other topics second-hand, during the wrap up when all participants come back together. This can be problematic for participants who have a strong interest in more than one topic. Second, this structure provides only limited time for critique and revision of the small-group work products when all participants regather, and it can be difficult to make informed comments based on the typically brief summaries presented in such sessions. In addition, discussion in the larger group is necessarily constrained by the larger number of participants, which limits opportunities for speaking.

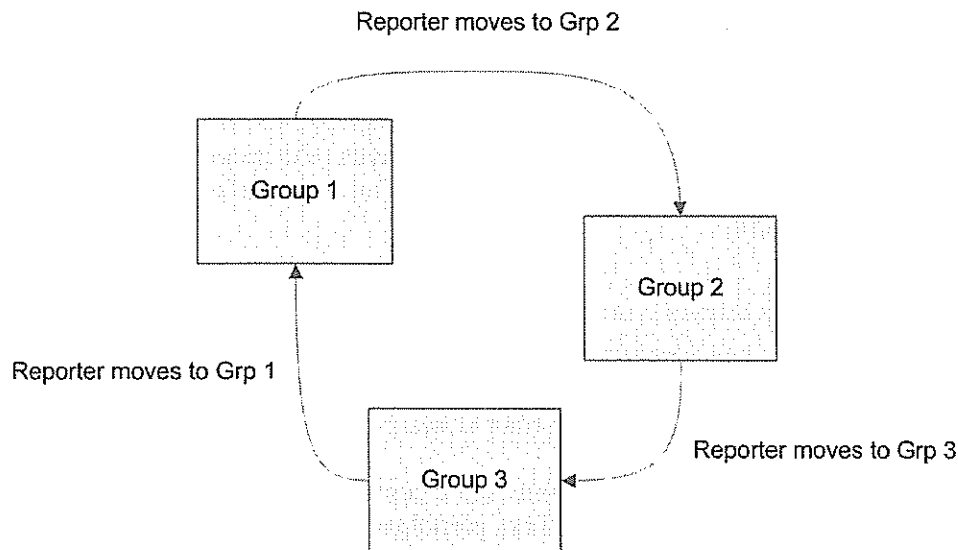
A simple alternative structure avoids these drawbacks and greatly accelerates the review and development of small group products:

- Break the large group into roughly equally sized small groups
- Break the problem into smaller pieces and assign a piece to each small group
- Or, assign the entire problem in parallel to all small groups
- Assign a discussion leader and a reporter for each small group
- Work session 1: each group develops a solution to the assigned problem
- Reporters then rotate among groups (see figure)
- Work session 2: reporters brief their new groups on what the previous group produced and each group critiques and revises the previous group's product
- Reporters then rotate again
- Work session 3: repeat the briefing, critique, and revision of the previous group's product

- Final session: reconvene the large group and hear the reporters' summaries of how the product developed as it moved through several small groups

The reporters remain with the same topic as they rotate among the small groups. This helps provide some continuity as the different topics cycle through the small groups.

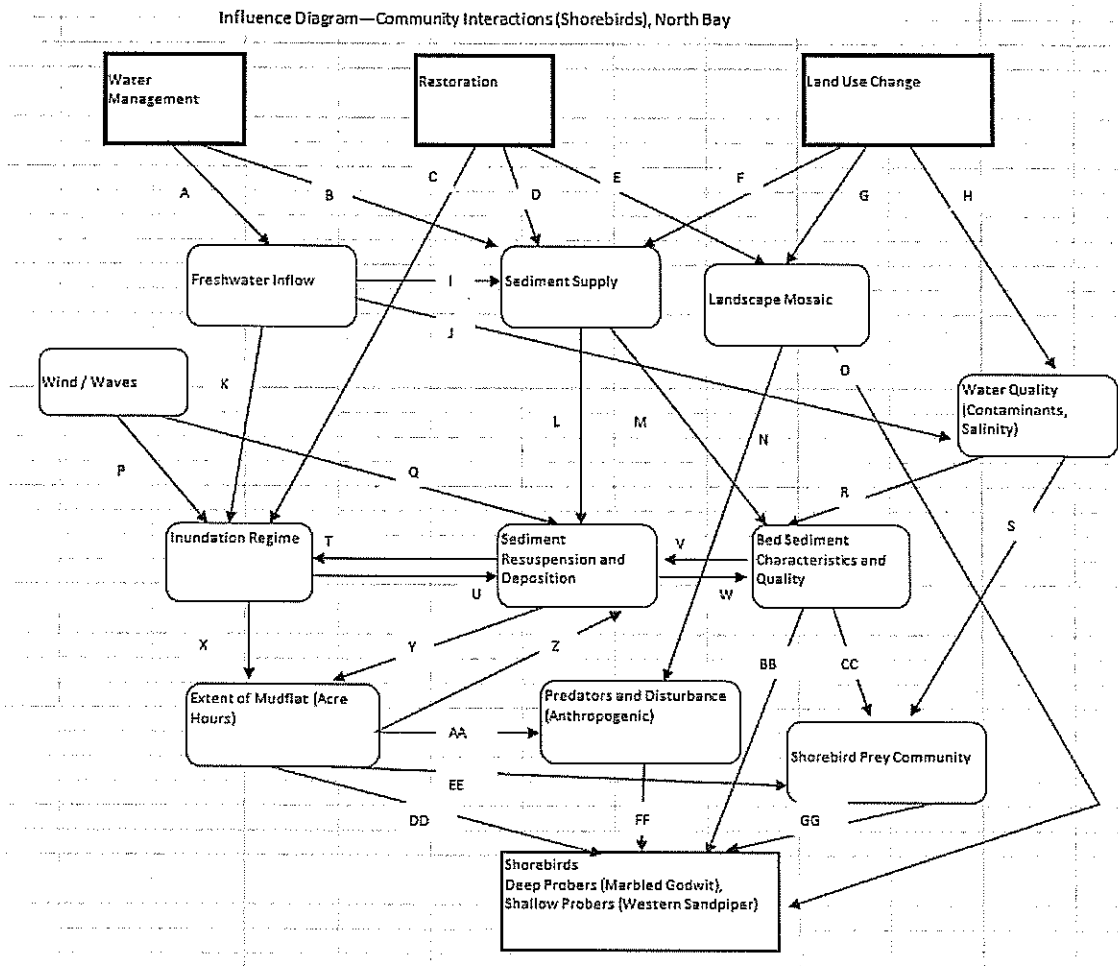
This round-robin structure can be applied to almost any problem or issue for which solutions can be framed relatively quickly and that would benefit from immediate review and revision from fresh perspectives. Participants in such round-robin planning efforts usually report that they felt their time was well spent. The successive review and revision creates a sense of progress, and tackling a new issue revitalizes groups that can lose momentum if they focus on a single issue for more than an hour or so.



### ***Expert Elicitation Tools***

The USEPA's climate ready estuaries workshops for Boston Harbor and San Francisco Bay included two tools that could be useful here. One is influence diagrams, or conceptual models, (see figure below) that were developed according to rigorous rules (e.g., a limit on the number of nodes, a clear statement about the key resource – shorebirds in this case). The other is a rating of each link in the influence diagram according to its relative influence (i.e., how important it is in controlling the behavior of the system) and the degree of confidence in our understanding of the link. In the estuaries workshops, the influence diagrams produced new insights into system function and helped identify vulnerabilities and opportunities for management and mitigation. Rating individual links was more time consuming than preparing the influence diagrams but, once the ratings were analyzed, provided additional guidance about prioritizing indicator selection and modeling efforts (e.g., important links that are poorly understood would be a high priority for further investigation).

One or more influence diagrams could be prepared ahead of the March workshop and used to support discussion on one or more of the specific topics. Conversely, groups could be asked to prepare an influence diagram to support and/or illustrate their conclusions and recommendations, if time permits.



### ***National Institutes of Health (NIH) Consensus Format***

The NIH uses a structured process to assess evidence and arrive at consensus (or not) on issues surrounded by a high degree of controversy. The process has two main components, a preliminary process to develop a short list of specific questions that focus on aspects of the controversy and then the consensus conference itself. Each step involves the following details:

- Develop conference questions
  - Prepare background materials
    - Issues
    - Process ground rules
  - Select workgroup
    - Neutral chair
    - Representatives of different perspectives
  - Produce three to six concise written questions
- Prepare for consensus conference
  - Select expert panel to make the case
    - Active in the issue
    - Well respected
    - Different viewpoints
    - Prepare presentations

- Select review panel
  - Respected scientists in areas relevant to the issue
  - Not directly involved in the controversy or identified with one specific perspective
  - Highly skilled chair
- Consensus conference
  - Experts make presentations and are questioned by review panel
  - Review panel goes into executive session to prepare draft consensus position
  - Review panel presents draft consensus to expert panel
  - Expert panel provides feedback to review panel
  - Review panel goes into executive session to write final consensus statement (typically only a few pages long)
  - Review panel presents final consensus statement

The NIH schedules two and a half days for their consensus conferences but I have completed this in two days, though the review panel had to work into the evening of the first day to meet this schedule.

workshop into 3 major chunks

presentation of material → explain what tasks are for the day

round robins to address questions

Regroup to summarize findings



## BJ Miller conversation

Brock Bernstein

to:

Bruce Herbold, Erin Foresman, Karen Schwinn, Sam Ziegler, Thomas Jabusch, Tim Vendlinski, Tom Hagler

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- one of our highest priorities is EH
- focus on EH standard with this workshop, there are other venues to address ~~the~~ other WQ parameters, ammonium, etc. nutrients
- This is about updating the standard EH
- focused tightly on pending d-m project by SWRCB

I just had a long talk with BJ Miller re his concerns about the workshop specifically and about Delta management more generally. In a nutshell, he believes that it is much more likely that the POD is due to foodweb impacts caused by changes in the balance of nutrients (i.e., excess ammonium) than to salinity and flow effects.

A related concern is that salinity and the position of X2 do not, in and of themselves, define habitat. There are lots of other factors involved in habitat that are not captured by the focus on X2. Thus, the impression created by the wording in the agenda (i.e., salinity = habitat) is misleading.

Third, the management implications of the different scenarios are very different. The foodweb / ammonium view leads to, first, reducing ammonium and then implementing other actions based on how the system responds. The flow / X2 view leads to controls on outflow and lots of potentially ineffective (at least in terms of POD organisms) habitat restoration.

BJ would be happy if the workshop considered the foodweb scenario as at least a plausible hypothesis, but is afraid that the flow / X2 mindset is so deeply entrenched that there is no room for an alternate perspective.

Finally, he spoke fairly enthusiastically about the value of a joint fact finding process that would do a more intensive version of what Thomas did, i.e., identify areas of agreement, disagreement, specific sources of agreement, types of uncertainty, and analyses or other studies needed to resolve disagreements.

I encouraged him to have an open mind about the workshop and EPA's agenda control, but he remains skeptical.

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